

THIS IS OUR LIFE

BY BARRY GIBB

...who continues telling in his own words the life-story of The Bee Gees.

DO you know much about geography? Great, then you'll know that Tasmania is an island off the bottom part of Australia. And that's where we Gibb boys were, showing ourselves off to the local populace, when a certain record called *Love Me Do* came out. Four fellows named The Beatles were the group concerned.

Mind you, they didn't exactly go a bomb right from the start. Nobody much cared for *Love Me Do*, and most support was for the flip, *I Saw Her Standing There*. And we thought to ourselves, smugly, that it was a stupid name for a group and that anyway we'd hold 'em out of Aussie-land simply because we were getting established there.

How wrong can you be! I've told you that the Aussies are, in some ways, a funny lot of people. First, they resent a lot of British people—like us, in the early days. Then they'll suddenly go overboard for a new star attraction—specially if the rest of the world has already latched on to them.

So suddenly everybody started having another go at us. "Listen to 'em—they're nothing but Beatle copiers..."—that was the big put-down. Copying The Beatles? How could we be—we'd been pushing out records for quite a while in Australia, and we'd never heard of what the columnists called the 'Mop-heads from Merseyside'.

One guy, a disc-jockey mate of ours called John Laws, reckoned we were getting rough treatment and kept on plugging away with our discs. He fought a losing battle. Most people just treated us as if we didn't exist. No wonder our records were flopping with resounding thuds. And some of these Dee-jays really paid us back for what they regarded as our sheer cheek—like insulting them about

taking bribes!

Of course, this sort of knocking rubbed off on the public. They took up the theme. Just as we figured we were building up a following, the audiences started shouting: "Get off—stop trying to be like The Beatles!" It broke the twins up. I was the kind of elder statesman of the group, of course, and had to set an example. Dad and I tried to explain that anyone in show-business was open to criticism and that we had to be tough enough to get over it.

But this was so darned unfair. How could we be copying something we knew nothing about? Still, with the Aussies you don't argue. Just keep quiet and hope that things will turn back in your favour.

Now I've told you how our records were flopping. But one eventually made the grade. It was *Spicks And Specks*, and this was one of our own songs. All it did was stir up more trouble between us and The Beatles—four guys we'd never even met. We know John, Paul, George and Ringo now, and we've never really explained how they put a right old Liverpool spanner in our works "down under!"

If they hadn't come on the scene via their early records, if the newspapers and dee-jays hadn't been brain-washed by stories of these new world-wide sensations... well, maybe we'd have stayed put in Australia and built on the fame that we'd started getting as kids. Instead, we had a family meeting. Mum, Dad, the twins and me. All brought down with long, long faces and a great feeling of resentment fairly swirling round the room.

We'd come to Australia with hope but little money. By the time we decided we'd go back to Britain where, we figured, they "appreciated" pop stars much more, we were again running short of cash. After all, we'd lived it up to star status in Australia, convinced that there was no bottom to our own personal pot of gold. It meant disrupting the whole family all over again, but our parents had a deep belief in our talent. They boosted our drooping group ego... agreed that we'd travel half-way across the world again in search of both fame and happiness.

Already we'd decided that if we couldn't beat The Beatles, we'd have to join 'em. We'd loved the boys and loathed them (nothing personal, mind!) and we'd sent copies of our flopperoo discs to their manager, Brian Epstein! He was immediately impressed? No, he was not!

But he passed the copies on to Robert Stigwood, an Australian making a big name for himself in London—and a partner of the late Mr. Epstein. With a couple of hundred quid between us, we set sail for England.

And our morale was in for a further denting—as I'll explain next week.

The Bee Gees, l. to r. Robin and Barry Gibb, Vince Melouney, Maurice Gibb, Colin Petersen.

